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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: DEATH OF ECONOMY AND TRADE MINISTER FUTA

11. (U) Minister of Economy and Trade Andre Philippe Futa died in Paris October 1, 2009 from an apparent heart attack. Futa had stopped in Paris on route back to Kinshasa after representing President Kabila at the Africa-South America Summit hosted by Venezuela. No foul play has been reported, though details on his death remain limited.

12. (SBU) Note: French DCM told Charge October 1 that the French embassy here has been in touch with authorities in Paris and there does not appear to be any indication that Futa's death is the result of anything other than natural causes. End note.

13. (U) Futa, a Luba from Eastern Kasai who received a doctorate in the United States, was sixty-six at the time of his death. His career included over twenty years with the African Development Bank and a variety of government positions, including several ministerial postings. Known as a loyal supporter of President Kabila, Futa served as Coordinator of the AMP (Alliance Presidential Majority) and Chairman of the Party of National Alliance for Unity (PANU).

14. (SBU) Comment: While Futa was a close contact of ours on trade issues, particularly AGOA, his death will likely not have a significant immediate impact on the DRC's economic and political landscape. Rumors of a cabinet reshuffle continue and it was unclear if Futa would have retained his position. Despite his position as Minister of Economy and Trade, his influence on economic policy was less than those of other ministers responsible for economic and financial issues, particularly the heads of the ministries of budget, planning, and finance. His death does, however, leave President Kabila without a key supporter in the Kasais provinces as the country moves toward the 2011 elections. End comment.

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